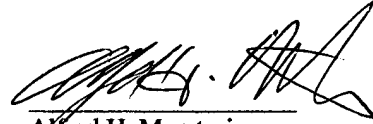


It is hereby respectfully submitted that the prior art of record fails to show the limitation in independent claims 1 and 4 wherein two (claim 1) or three (claim 4) axes of rotation intersect at the center of the end face of the fiber. It is submitted, therefore, that claims 1 and 4 and dependent claims 2 and 3 are allowable over the prior art of record, and early indication of the same is respectfully requested.

Sincerely,

August 26, 2004

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alfred H. Muratori', written over a horizontal line.

Alfred H. Muratori
Agent for Applicant
Reg. No. 41,561